



December 1, 2011

Montgomery County Civic Federation Comments to DHCA on Revision of Housing Policy

The following list of comments and suggestions was approved by the Federation's Executive Committee for transmittal to the Department of Housing and Community Affairs via Jim Humphrey, Chair of the MCCF Planning and Land Use Committee (email - theelms518@earthlink.net).

- 1) The Federation strongly supports continuing the approval process for all accessory apartments as Special Exceptions granted by the Board of Appeals--a review panel composed of citizen appointees who are tasked with considering undue concentration and possible negative impact on the neighborhood when reviewing accessory apartment applications.
- 2) We believe a top priority of the Housing Policy should be the preservation of existing affordably priced housing, both government-controlled and "market rate affordable" rental and sale units, while insuring units are maintained in good condition. The most affordable housing units are those that already exist, since housing on redeveloped sites is almost always priced higher than that which currently exists.
- 3) Another objective of the Housing Policy should be to preserve the character and quality of life of existing residential neighborhoods.
- 4) We would have serious concerns about any attempt to permit "by right" any new dwelling unit types through revision of county regulatory processes (for example, the rewrite of the Zoning Ordinance), which could greatly increase density of units and population in an area without requiring reopening the area's master or sector plan to consider the infrastructure necessary to support such an increase.
- 5) We suggest an objective of the Housing Policy should be to improve opportunities for home ownership by moderate income households, by recommending amendment of the Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) law and regulations. Ever since the MPDU control period was lengthened*, we have strongly believed the process must be stopped of allowing the Housing Opportunities Commission and other non-profit housing agencies to buy up to a total of 40% of sale MPDUs created in new projects before any units are offered to applicants on the Program waiting list. A primary purpose of the MPDU program should be to assist moderate income households in purchasing homes and building equity in them, facilitating their moving up and out of the MPDU program and buying market rate units within the 30 year control period (thus freeing up the MPDU to be resold to another eligible applicant on the waiting list). Since sale MPDUs bought by HOC and the non-profits are usually converted to rental units, we believe they should be allowed to purchase only those sale MPDUs for which no eligible applicant household has applied.

We thank the DHCA staff for considering these comments while drafting the 2012 Housing Policy.

* Council amendment of County Code Sec.25A-3(g), on 11/30/04, increased the control period for MPDU sale units from 10 to 30 years.